

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-25

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SUBJECT: OBSERVATIONS ON PM CARAMANLIS' ADDRESS AUGUST 31

REF: THESSALONIKI 0531

1. SUMMARY: CARAMANLIS' SPEECH PAST WEEKEND WAS NOTABLY VOID OF COMMITMENTS OF PLEDGES BUT EMPHASIZED ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF HIS OWN ONE-MONTH ADMINISTRATION. HE JUSTIFIED GREECE'S WITHDRAWAL FROM NATO'S MILITARY ARM AND ANTICIPATED TURKS SOME DAY WILL BE CAPTIVES OF THEIR RECENT CONQUESTS. CARAMANLIS EXPLAINED CYPRUS AS TRAGIC CONSEQUENCE OF MISADVENTURE OF DICTATORSHIP AND DIFFERENTIATED BETWEEN AMERICAN PUBLIC ATTITUDE AND U.S. POLICY TOWARD CYPRUS. HE TOLD AN ESTIMATED 400,000 ENTHUSIASTIC THESSALONIANS, WHOSE INTERRUPTIONS DOUBLED HIS SPEECH TIME, THAT MODERATION WOULD HASTEN DATE FOR ELECTIONS. END SUMMARY.

2. WITH SOMBER MIEN ONLY INFREQUENTLY BROKEN BY RESTRAINED SMILE RESPONDING TO TUMULTUOUS CROWD OF ABOUT 400,000 CARAMANLIS ADDRESSED PUBLIC FOR FIRST TIME SINCE HIS RETURN TO GREECE OVER MONTH AGO. AS MACEDONIAN HIMSELF
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FROM SERRES, HIS SELECTION OF FELLOW-COMPATRIOTS FOR THIS

INITIAL PUBLIC CONTACT WAS APPROPRIATE. HIS DELIVERY WITH UNDISGUISED POLITICAL GESTURES MORE REMINISCENT OF JFK THAN USUAL TWO-FISTED GREEK POLITICAL TECHNIQUE STIRRED COMMENT THROUGHOUT NATION.

3. CARAMANLIS REVIEWED RECORD OF HIS ADMINISTRATION'S ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND APPEALED FOR MODERATION DURING TRANSITION PERIOD LEADING AWAY FROM SEVEN YEAR ABYSS. HE CLEARLY PLACED RESPONSIBILITY FOR CYPRUS TRAGEDY ON "FOOLISHNESS" OF MILITARY REGIME AND STRESSED THAT "CRISIS" CONTINUES. PREMIER REFERRED TO RESTORATION OF CIVIL LIBERTIES AND ARMY'S RESUMPTION OF NORMAL DUTIES AND SUBMISSION TO POLITICAL AUTHORITY. REFERENCE BEARS WITNESS TO CARAMANLIS' METHODOICAL RESTRUCTURING TO RETURN GOVERNMENT TO CIVILIAN CONTROL. HE SAID DATE FOR ELECTIONS COULD BE ANNOUNCED WITHIN BRIEFER PERIOD IF POLITICAL CLIMATE IS CONTROLLED. HE CALLED ON PRESS PARTICULARLY TO SHOW POLITICAL MATURITY. CARAMANLIS' LACK OF SPECIFICS CONFIRMS OUR VIEW REPORTED EARLIER THAT HE IS MOVING CAREFULLY AND SYSTEMATICALLY. PRIME MINISTER EMPHASIZED THAT ONE MONTH IS NOT AMPLE TIME TO PREPARE FOR ELECTIONS AND RESOLVE NATION'S PROBLEMS INHERITED FROM MILITARY REGIME. CARAMANLIS KNOWS LIMITATIONS IMPOSED BY THE DOMESTIC BALANCE OF POLITICAL/MILITARY FORCES AND CANNOT AFFORD TO RISK MISTAKES BY MOVING TOO SWIFTLY. WITH CYPRUS HUMILIATION WEIGHING HEAVILY, HE RECOGNIZED HIS OWN VULNERABILITY FROM POLITICAL ELEMENTS SUCH AS ANDREAS PAPANDREOU TO EXPLOIT POSSIBLE MISSTEPS. HIS APPEAL FOR MODERATION IMPLIED RESPECT FOR PUBLIC ORDER WHICH HE HAS CONVEYED MORE EXPLICITLY THROUGH HIS CONSTANT CONFIDANT, MINISTER OF PUBLIC ORDER SOLON GHIKAS.

4. THE PRIME MINISTER REGRETTED NATO'S "INCAPABILITY" TO DEAL WITH THE CYPRUS CRISIS, THE CONSEQUENCES OF WHICH JUSTIFIED GREECE'S MILITARY WITHDRAWAL FROM IT. HIS REITERATION OF GREECE'S EUROPEAN ORIENTATION CONFIRMS EMBASSY'S PREVIOUS REPORTING. CARAMANLIS DID NOT CLOSE ANY DOORS FOR U.S.-GREEK COOPERATION. HIS REFERENCE TO FRIENDSHIP OF AMERICAN PEOPLE WAS A CLEAR ATTEMPT TO DAMPEN ANTI-AMERICAN SENTIMENT IN GREECE WITHOUT RELAXING LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PRESSURE ON U.S. GOVERNMENT. REFERRING TO VALUE OF GREEK-TURKISH FRIENDSHIP CARAMANLIS BROUGHT ELEMENT OF BALANCE TO HIS OTHERWISE ACCUSATORY REMARKS CONCERNING TURKISH ACTIONS.

5. CARAMANLIS' FIRST PUBLIC APPEARANCE RECEIVED TOP MARKS DESPITE DISAPPOINTMENT OF SOME AT ABSENCE OF SPECIFIC ANNOUNCEMENTS AND HE CONTINUES TO RIDE CREST

OF PUBLIC RESPECT AND PRESTIGE WHICH THIS STATESMANLIKE
ADDRESS ENHANCED.
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